(c) whether Government would consult the States and fix mutually-agreed issue prices for foodgrains to increase offtake?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) The allocation and offtake of foodgrains for Below Poverty Line (BPL) families during the last three years was as follows:—

	Allocation (in lakh tonnes)	Offtake (in lakh tonnes)	% Offtake
2002-2003	268.98	172.62	64.18
2003-2004	271.05	199.68	73.67
2004-2005	273.30	228.45	83.59

The offtake of foodgrains depends upon various factors like local availability of foodgrains, prevalent market prices, food preferences of local people, etc. It is, therefore, normally less than cent percent. However, taking an overview for the entire country, the offtake for BPL families is considered to be satisfactory as it is more than 70% for the last two years.

(b) No, Sir. Offtake of foodgrains has increased both in absolute quantities and in terms of percentage to allocation in the last three years.

(c) The views of States are taken into account while fixing the CIPs.

Reduction in prices of anti-cancer drugs

*17. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently suggested to the pharmaceutical industry to reduce the prices of anti-cancer drugs for the benefit of the poor cancer patients;

(b) if so, their response thereto; and

(c) if answer to part (b) above be in the negative what remedial action Government propose to take in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS): (a) to (c) The Department of Chemicals & Petrochemicals conducted a meeting on 13.12.05, which was attended by some of the leading manufacturers of cancer medicines,

representatives of the cancer hospitals and NGOs involved with treatment of cancer in India. In this meeting, it was emphasized that the prices of most of the anti cancer drugs are quite high and, therefore, the manufacturers may voluntarily take necessary steps to bring down prices of such drugs.

However, the manufactures suggested that they will examine the possibility of bringing down the prices of such drugs on their own but they requested the Government of India to reduce the custom, central excise and VAT on such medicines to zero.

The Government has framed the Draft National Pharmaceutical Policy, 2006 (Part-A) and circulated the same to various Government Departments and other stakeholders. The following steps have been suggested in the Draft Pharmaceutical Policy for making anti-cancer drugs available at reasonable prices to a much larger section of population:—

1. Government would completely exempt anti-cancer drugs (bulk and formulations) from all types of Central taxes-excise duty, import duty etc. and the benefit would be passed on to the consumers.

2. States would also be asked to exempt these medicines from all types of State and local levies.

3. Industry and trade would be asked to reduce their margins—both profit and trade margins to the barest minimum level and pass on the benefit to the consumers.

4. A subsidy scheme for making cancer drugs affordable to the common man would be worked out with the help of concerned manufactures and cancer hospitals. Under this scheme, a subsidy on the sale of anti-cancer drugs would be made available to all cancer hospitals who register under the scheme.

5. Subsidized anti-cancer medicines would be provided to all the cancer patients from the retail outlets of cancer hospitals on the recommendations of doctors of such hospitals.

The draft policy has been circulated to all the concerned departments and feedback on the above issue is awaited from them. Based on the response of various departments, a final view on the issue would be taken.